LALIT NARAYAN MITHILA UNIVERSITY

Kameshwar Nagar, Darbhanga

A Synopsis

For

Ph.D. Research Work on the topic:

SECURITY THREAT TO NORTHEAST INDIA: GEO-STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF THE SILIGURI CORRIDOR

Submitted to

UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

Faculty of Social Sciences

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TITLE OF THE RESEARCH WORK

SECURITY THREAT TO NORTHEAST INDIA: GEO-STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF THE SILIGURI CORRIDOR

STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Siliguri Corridor or the Chicken Neck of India is a narrow stretch of land located in West Bengal connecting the Indian mainland to the Northeastern states of the nation. It lies in the Chumbi Valley of the Chinese held Tibetan Autonomous Region that is contiguous to the Indian states of Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh specifically. This corridor is squeezed between two of India's neighbours, namely Nepal and Bangladesh. Due to this Siliguri Corridor, the entire Northeast India becomes highly important geo-strategically and geo-politically. The inhabitants of this region suffer from the sense of alienation due to the territorial estrangement. This corridor extends at around 60 kilometres in length and almost 22 kilometres in width all the while even reducing to 17 kilometres in certain places of the corridor. This corridor is very crucial for trade and economic development of Northeast and the success of BIMSTEC.

Due to the power politics among the nations, the South Asia comes as a new frontier for great power competition. In addition to the ever increasing geo-political significance of South Asia, it also houses some of the locations and regions with crucial strategic importance. These regions are not just important in terms of regional politics but also have security implications as well. The Siliguri Corridor or the Chicken Neck of India is a notable strategic location among them. With the current events in mind, its significance in the region has grown to an astronomical level. How does geo-strategic interests of India and China converge on Siliguri Corridor?

RESEARCH COVERAGE: THEME AND AREA

The political scenario of the South Asian region is being more complex and it has been multidimensional with growing shift in focus regarding great powers and power politics. Territorial disputes between the two and Chinese expansionism have made the Siliguri Corridor highly sensitive.

The Siliguri Corridor or The Chicken Neck is a narrow stretch of land located in the West Bengal that connects Indian northeastern states to the rest of India. At its narrowest, the corridor is just 17 km wide. It borders Nepal, Bangladesh and kingdom of Bhutan. The corridor extends from the Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri and Terrain areas of West Bengal towards the North East. The Siliguri Corridor is strategically important and highly sensitive territory, as it is the only bridge between the eight north-eastern states of India and the rest of India.

REREARCH QUESTIONS

- How the role of Siliguri Corridor is immense in the economic growth and development of the Northeast India?

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- How is Siliguri Corridor extremely important geo-strategically Siliguri being the gateway of Northeast India?
- How Northeast India's security implications are highly dependent on the Chicken Neck?
- How can the problem of ethnic insurgency be mitigated with proper monitoring and initiative of Govt. Of India using Siliguri Corridor to its good effect?
- How can Siliguri Corridor play a pivotal role for keeping the problems of illegal migrations, illicit trades and cross border terrorism in check?

Significance of Siliguri Corridor

The Siliguri Corridor is important for trade, commerce and tourism for West Bengal, Sikkim, Assam, Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh.

- All land trade between the Northeast and the rest of the country happens through this corridor.
- The corridor is the hub of all rail and road network connecting West Bengal and the rest of India to the Northeast including Assam, Nagaland and Sikkim.

It is also the hub of railway network that connects to the strategic military formations along the line of Actual control (LAC). From the New Jalpaiguri (NJP) railway station different rail links emerge to connect the three important military formations located right opposite China. From the NJP station, a rail link moves towards Guwahati in Assam. It is from here that a road network moves towards the strategically important Twang town in Arunachal Pradesh.

This present study will cover Siliguri region which is the Gateway of North East India. The presence of Siliguri Corridor has put the whole of North East India under severe security threat. India and China are the two biggest rival countries in the Asian scenario. In the western fronts due to Chinese encroachment and skirmish along the Mc Mohan line, the entire northeast region has become unstable and come under the upcoming threat. India's Northeast region previously eloquently known as 'The Seven Sisters' and now comprising of eight political units viz. Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya , Mizoram , Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura, is a unique part of the country. The geographical structure and ethnic-cultural diversity of the region projects an impression, different from the rest of the country. The geographical location of India's Northeast region is very vulnerable, unstable and China has always been trying to make the situation much more complicated using the ethnic insurgencies existing for long throughout different areas of NE. China is making a lot of efforts with constant attempt of encroachments, developing infrastructure in the border area and enhancing bonhomie with the active insurgent groups and neighbouring countries of the region to implement its expansionist policy. The Chicken Neck or The Siliguri Corridor of India is such a narrow corridor which China can exploit at the time of any probable war with India making the country entirely cut off from the rest of India . Due to Chinese aggression over the years especially in Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim , the entire North East region has become much more significant from the geo-political perspective. Due to these Chinese actions , the whole of North East region is in trouble and this entire region

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has a unique place in the National security domain . This present study will highlight and focus on the national security concerns and vulnerability of the Chicken Neck and how this corridor may be a certain target for China to pose security challenges for India in the North East region due to Chinese influence at the Indian border of the North East.

The term 'Northeast' was formalized through the British colonial administration as a frontier region. It is inked with Indian heartland through the 21 km wide Siliguri Corridor , which is commonly known as the chicken neck, created by the Radcliffe line, the boundary drawn by the British colonial administration before they departed from India in 1947. The corridor is flanked by Bhutan, Bangladesh and Nepal. The Northeast borders on four countries namely China and Bhutan on its North; Myanmar to its East and Bangladesh on its South and West. It has an area of 2.6 lakh sq. Km (7.67% of India's land area)

The northeastern part of India is entangled in ethnic conflict. Such conflicts have not only disturbed the peace and stability in the region but have also violated all norms of humanity by eternalising crude atrocities and violence upon innocent people. The Northeast is not a homogenous region. Each of the seven states in the region has distinctive character and personality shaped by the composition of its population, its culture and traditions and the history of its political evolution. It may be added that practically all the states have had dispute with their neighbours, sometimes leading to violent conflicts.

These violent actions and ethnic insurgent groups on many occasions are assisted by the neighbouring states (Myanmar, Bhutan, Bangladesh and China, such violent group when face counter insurgency operations by Govt (state govt and Central govt) use territory of these neighbouring countries as their hiding places and especially China as part of their anti -Indian nature provide these organisations their desired shelter. China and Bangladesh sometimes use these rebel organisations against India which has always been a matter of grave concern for Indian Govt.

The broad racial differences between India and its Northeast and tenuous geographical link (the chicken neck or the Siliguri Corridor) contributed to a sense of alienation , a feeling of detachment that subsequently gave rise to a political culture of violent separatism . Further Northeast India is home to more than 50 ethnic rebel groups- a few demanding complete secession from India , others fighting for ethnic identities and homelands and some running the insurgency as an industry to earn easy money without any political ideology.

Factors responsible for insurgency in North East

One of the important factors is funding – Main source of funding are extortion, arms.

- Multi – Ethnic Region – NE is the most ethnically diverse region in India. It is having its own distinct culture.
- Lack of Economic Development – Govt of India economic policies have also fuelled insurgency thereby resulting in lack of employment opportunities.
- Easy availability of arms and ammunition from hostile neighbours.
- Sense of isolation, deprivation and exploitation. Distance from New Delhi and corridors of power dialogue leading to more disillusionment in the dialogue process.

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Demographic changes: The influx of refugees from Bangladesh into Assam amongst the people of the region, thereby giving rise to insurgency in 'Assam with immigrant and agitation.

Ethnic differences: The tribes here belong to Mongoloid origin and consider themselves different from the Aryan and Dravidian races of mainstream India. So, integrating them to the mainstream India has always been difficult. So, to protect their distinct culture and history, these groups always took help of insurgency.

External support

The insurgencies in the NE have been supported by erstwhile Naga Army and giving them weapons, later China also provided weapons and China's foreign policy advocated the spread of revolution around the world. Different ethnic insurgent groups have always used Chinese and Bangladeshi soil as their safe haven.

Proximity to the golden triangle ensures funding for separatist or secessionist groups.

Though China surely engages with North east insurgents in different capacities, counter to intuitions, it would not be able to overhaul the security situation in this region to India's detriment in a strategic sense.

In few cases, arms were loaded from China, Beihai port at the Gulf of Tonkin in the south China sea, transferred into small fishing trawlers in the high seas near Cox's Bazaar in Bangladesh and smuggled into India from them.

Till 2006, when Zia's anti India Bangladesh Nationalist Party was in power in Dhaka , NSCN and ULFA –I were allowed to have bases near the border areas as well as in Dhaka and Chittagong . The weapons that NSCN-IM stored in these camps were silently transferred to camps in Nagaland and Manipur as the group planned to restock them with new weapons arriving from the Beihai port.

Ever since , India's external intelligence agency the Research and Analysis wing (R& AW) and China's Ministry of State Security (MSS) have played hide and seek when it comes to Baruah , Tangkhul and Calvin, among other issues.

Beijing has remained silent on such support to ensure deniability and signal restraint to India if not maintain outright secrecy, Baruah's presence in China is hardly a secret.

Insurgent groups surely offer Beijing an effective tool to exert pressure on New Delhi during moments of crisis such as now, local dynamics receive a boost from powerful external factors- China.

The secessionist movements in Northeast India have impacted the socio-economic structure of all the states of Northeast. Ethnic insurgency has been a major reason of disturbances down the ages in all the seven states of Northeast. Different secessionist movements cause security threat to the Indian Government. Since the British rule various rebel organisations put the administration under huge crisis. The entire Northeast region is culturally diverse, geographically detached and marginalised and

13/4/24

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blessed with abundant natural resources, but they have been neglected ever since the period of Indian independence. The remoteness from the other parts of India had not been attended with proper infrastructural development, rapid trade transactions and better connectivity. The situation of ethnic insurgency has become much more acute with the external support which these organisations have been getting from the foreign soil. These separatist movements have disturbed the Indian economy as well. The North east is linked to the other parts of India only through the Siliguri Corridor, a 22 km wide corridor which is known as Chicken Neck of India due to its resemblance to the shape of a chicken's neck. The secessionist movements of Northeast have become a matter of extreme concern due to the geo-strategic importance of Siliguri Corridor.

The Role of Northeast India in implementing BIMSTEC is instrumental, the economy of India especially Northeast India has been augmented by the effective implementation of BIMSTEC. BIMSTEC is a multilateral organisation. The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi – sectoral Technical and Economic Co-operation.

Its members lie in the littoral and adjacent areas of the Bay of Bengal constituting a contiguous regional unity.

Out of 7 members- Five are from South Asia- Bangladesh, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Nepal and India.

Two are from South East Asia – Myanmar, Thailand.

It mainly aims to create an enabling environment for rapid economic development, accelerate social progress and promote collaboration on matters of common interest in the region.

Main objectives of BIMSTEC- Peaceful co-existence, rapid economic development. Economic development of India's North -eastern states by linking them to the Bay of Bengal region via Bangladesh and Myanmar. It allows India to counter China's creeping influence in countries around the Bay of Bengal due to the spread of its Belt and Road Initiative.

The geographic location of the Northeast has allowed India to put its Act East policy into action by leveraging the BIMSTEC platform and strengthening the country's position in the region. In December 2020,Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla highlighted the Northeast as a 'gateway between the two pillars of India's foreign policy – 'Neighbourhood first and Act East '. The Northeast borders for BIMSTEC Countries (Bangladesh, Bhutan , Nepal and Myanmar) making it a key cog in regional co-operation . It is home to about 3.8 percent of the Indian population, covers 8 percent of the country's geographic area and has approximately 5300 km of international borders. India has been viewing this area from the perspective of increasing investments through transnational connectivity, particularly with Bangladesh, Myanmar and Thailand. The Northeast presents a trillion –dollar economic opportunity that can be enhanced with better transportation, border infrastructure , e commerce , integration and modernised cross – border supply – chains – all of which are still unrealised. If this potential is tapped

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'Indian policymakers expect that the country's experts will pick up that the more investments will flow in and the regional integration will serve as a positive effect for greater global economic interdependence. This will bring development to the North eastern states and internationalise India's hinterland economy through maritime and cross-border hubs on the eastern coast with Bangladesh and Myanmar while the Northeast has historically remained 'marginalised' due to local insurgencies the new connectivity projects will eliminate the region's remoteness by linking to the centre (New Delhi) through West Bengal, with Kolkata as liaison city. Various multilateral connectivity projects through Northeast are already under way, such as the India – Myanmar –Thailand trilateral Highway project, the road from Dawki- Tambil along India – Bangladesh border in Meghalaya that connects all continental ASEAN countries and the construction of the 1.8 km long Feni bridge connecting India and Bangladesh for the transport of goods from the Chittagong and Kolkata ports.

India has also been aiming to develop alternative multimodal transportation from its east coast ports to the Northeast through Myanmar by using the latter's inland waterways and roads to reduce its dependence on the Siliguri Corridor and further its Act East policy. In other words, The Northeast is being developed for India's reintegration with Southeast Asia via BIMSTEC.

The Northeast and wider BIMSTEC region also face issues illegal migration, drug and human trafficking. Drug production and trafficking are rampant in the Golden Triangle region. Northeast India is also along the heroin trafficking route, with many labs located near India-Myanmar border.

Japan has been involved in various capacities in the BIMSTEC nations. The Northeast has emerged as a convergence between India's Act East Policy and Japan's Free and Open Indo-Pacific vision. Japan and India are collaborating in countries like Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Myanmar to promote infrastructural linkages and development. Japan's development work in the Northeast is also expected to boost connectivity between the BIMSTEC states.

At the same time, India has also become a member of India-Japan Act East Forum, which primarily overseas projects targeting the economic modernization of the Northeast. These include the National highways of Mizoram, Manipur and Tripura biodiversity and forest management and water supply and sanitation in Assam.

BIMSTEC play an instrumental role in promoting and preparing the Northeast to unleash its potential by hosting various connectivity projects for sub-regional development. This effort must begin by developing the Northeast through the following ways-

Integrating the Northeast with the rest of India through stronger infrastructure linkage will build a robust cross-border production, chain network, particularly with Southeast Asia and Bangladesh.

Special economic zones can also be set up for specific projects like timber and food processing in the eight Northeast states, smart cities can also be established.

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The Northeast states must expedite the completion of ongoing railroad, inland water transport and aviation projects, and improve border infrastructure with adequate storage facilities.

The Northeast is culturally rich and is a biodiversity hotspot. It has huge potential to attract tourists from BIMSTEC countries and here the adoption of a connectivity master plan is crucial. To facilitate greater tourism, policymakers must give priority to the easing of visa requirements and consider implementing visa free travel or visa on arrival schemes for certain destinations.

Once the Northeast achieves stability and meets its development goals, a symbiotic relationship can be created between the region and BIMSTEC through connectivity projects.

The role of ASEAN in augmenting trade and economic development of Northeast through rapid connectivity and infrastructural modernization

The North- Eastern region of India lies in such a strategic location that it can act as a key player in 'Act East Policy' of India by partnering with ASEAN which will be vital for the economic development of the Northeast region. Act East policy holds a prime place in India's new proactive policy, as it is meant to boost commerce, connectivity, and cultural ties with ASEAN. The trade between India and ASEAN is mostly manufacturing products and is restrictive towards the agricultural products. Therefore, there is a need to focus on other aspects such as education, culture exchange program and tourism. For developing better business ties among ASEAN and Northeast, priority should be given to upgrade the economic corridors. Road is an important mode of travel in this region due to its hilly terrain.

Southeast Asia holds great prospects for the Northeast India as a market and vice versa within the ambits of the Act East Policy (AEP) and the vision 2020 document which deals with the international facet of tourism promotion.

India has a major partnership with her neighbouring ASEAN countries in trade and investment.

Connection between Manipur and Myanmar with a network of highway, railways, pipeline and transmission lines crisscrossing the region. Trilateral road connectivity India-Myanmar-Thailand will lead to a new horizon in the trade and economic relationship, expected to be completed by 2020.

The role of Northeast as a potential manufacturing hub, for this, the region needs to be connected more densely with the ASEAN and beyond. With its geographical remoteness, inherent deficiency in infrastructure and the bad publicity for recurrent ethnic strife and militant activities, the region could not become destination for private capital investment. Trade relations with Myanmar will lead India to close proximity to South East Asian region. India's Northeast is among the most endowed states in terms of the natural resources, including several critical minerals that it possesses and has substantial potential for generating one of the preferred low carbon forms of energy, viz

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hydroelectricity. Besides, it sits at the doorstep of East Asia, the region with which India is increasing its economic ties. The Northeast is the focal point of trade within a vast area, the region enjoys very special advantage over other parts of India in trade in view of India's Act East policy in general and India's economic Agreement (KTA) and other bilateral FTAs. Employment opportunities created in Manipur due to India- Myanmar trade relations.

For the all-round development of the Northeast region, the govt. has been proactive to make it an economic hub connecting Southeast Asia under Act East policy. The total allotted funds under 10% gross budgetary support from 54 Central Ministries for expenditure on development works in the Northeast have increased by 110% from 36,108 crores in 2014-2015 to Rs76040 crore in 2022-23. There is also a new scheme, the Prime Minister's Development Initiative for the Northeast (PM-Dev INE) was announced in the union Budget-2022-23 with an initial allocation of Rs1500 crore.

Act East Policy: Act East Policy was announced in November 2014; it is the upgrade of the 'Look East Policy' which was promulgated in 1992. The main objectives of 'Act East Policy' is to promote peaceful trade relations, economic co-operation, cultural ties, and develop strategic relationships with countries in the Asia-Pacific region through continuous engagement at bilateral regional and multilateral levels thereby providing enhanced connectivity to the states of North eastern region with other countries in our neighbourhood. The role of Act East Policy is highly instrumental in affecting a paradigm shift and marking a significant change in the potential role of the Northeast region. The Northeastern states of India have always been a reservoir of natural resources but in the past, government policies and their implementation had proved insufficient to make full utilization of the immense inherent potential of the North East Region. After the up gradation of Look East Policy to the Act East Policy, over the last eight years, the Union Govt. has been extremely responsive to the needs of this region, by making enhanced and faster connectivity, infrastructural development, and people's welfare part of its core development agenda. From being marginalized because of its geographical location, now the entire Northeast region is quickly becoming one of the country's growth engines.

The Role of SAARC in trade and development of North East India:

SAARC is aimed at promoting the welfare of the people; accelerating economic growth, social progress and culture development and strengthening collective self-reliance. This regional organisation attempts to work on mutual trust and understanding among the member countries. From the time of its inception, it aimed to strengthen cooperation with other developing countries as one of its objectives, it has been trying to build up an ambience of cooperation with international and regional organisations with similar aims and purpose.

North East India is connected to the rest of the country only through a narrow stretch of land in West Bengal, having an approximate width of 22km only called the 'Chicken's Neck' . The lack of proper connectivity is a big constraint to the domestic trade of

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Northeast India with the rest of the country. But sharing a large international land border (5437.15km) emerges as a big opportunity for Northeast India to reap benefits of cross border trade with neighbouring countries especially border trade. Here comes SAARC with its instrumental role in trade and economic development of Northeast India.

SAARC and its impact on Northeast Indian Economy:

The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) comprises India and 7 other South Asian nations. Though SAARC has made progress in certain areas, its impact on Indian economy has been limited due to various reasons. How the trade and economy of North East India can be uplifted by the few SAARC nations are highlighted below:

A thriving regional market: Deeper economic integration within SAARC can encourage a large regional market for Indian goods and services. SAARC can boost Indian exports and the manufacturing sector through Northeast Indian states.

Improved connectivity: Through Northeastern states, SAARC can expedite regional connectivity through transport to the South Asian countries and it could be beneficial for Indian economy.

Common policies: Harmonizing economic policies in areas like trade, investment, and agriculture.

Job creation: Thriving regional trade through Northeast India with countries like Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, Myanmar can boost labour intensive manufacturing in India, helping generate more jobs.

Technology transfer: Improved cooperation in areas like agriculture, renewable energy and IT can facilitate technology transfer to India from other members.

Improved food security: Initiatives to boost agricultural trade, research and technology sharing within SAARC can improve food security in India.

Infrastructure boost: SAARC projects in transport, energy and digital connectivity sectors could support India's infrastructure needs.

Poverty alleviation: Regional cooperation initiatives in areas like microfinance, rural development, healthcare and sanitation can benefit the poor in India especially in North East Indian states.

Tourism Promotion: Northeast India is full of diversity. The eight North East Indian states are favourite destination for tourism among the people from all over India. Promoting South Asia as a single destination under SAARC can boost Tourism in Northeast India.

Containing extremism: Effective security cooperation within SAARC can help India contain extremism and terrorism originating from the Northeast Indian region.

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To implement the objectives of SAARC to its full effect, North East India plays a very important role .With better connectivity and improved transportation the regional trade will be developed through North East India with the other neighbouring countries like Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal and Malaysia.

Considering the strategic geographic location of North eastern states, focus must be laid on the inter-regional movement of people. This requires inter country bus, air and rail services from Northeast India to neighbouring countries and vice versa.

Review of Literature:

Ray Haraprasad (2002)' *North East India's place in India- China Relations and its future role in India's Economy'* The author has attempted to highlight the strategic importance of North East India as it is incomparable. It is emphasized that Northeast India geo-strategically is more implosive than Kashmir. He has thrown light on that the inhabitants of this region suffer from the sense of alienation due to territorial estrangement.

Joshi Manoj .(2022) ***"Understanding the India China Border"*** – The Enduring threat of war in the High Himalayas in his book attempted to scrutinize the long standing the Sino-Indian Border Dispute as latest as the Doklam standoff(2017). He examined the effort specially from India's point of view to search for stability.

Haksar Nandita(2013)*"Across the Chicken Neck: Travels in Northeast India* "-in her book elaborated her travel experience through the states of North East India. This book is more than a travelogue because in her journey along with her husband, they at last came to the Chicken Neck of India and experienced how sensitive the Siliguri Corridor is from the security perspective .

Thapliyal Sangeeta(2022) *"India, China and the Strategic Himalayas"* is a book compiled with several chapters describing various facets of the North East India and its importance in the national domain. The strength of the book lies in providing in-depth analyses of the Himalayas from experts from the region, academics, military officials, and foreign policy experts.

M Micky (2020) *"Chicken's Neck: The Story of Under Cover Agents, Behind Enemy Lines"* in his book described a secret mission of Indian intelligence and its successful accomplishment. How the Indian intelligence scrambles three patriots to uncover this plot in a mission without any prior experience has been documented in this book.

Das Sailen D (2015) *"North East India in India-China Relations"* in his book mentioned how significant the role of North East India in maintaining Indo-China relations. The Northeast is connected to the rest of India through the Siliguri Corridor which is a very narrow passage and plays an important role from India's security perspective.

ARTICLES

Rahmati Fidel, Ali Mohd Akhter, Kamraju M- (2015)***' A Study on the strategic Location of Siliguri Corridor and its issues***-analysed that the Siliguri Corridor is a strategic region in the

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foot hills of Himalayan region, connecting India with North Eastern states. It is also known as the gateway of Northeast India. This corridor connects India through land with three neighbouring countries Nepal, Bhutan, and Bangladesh. This study scrutinizes the geo-strategic importance of the Chicken Neck which plays an important role in the National security challenges.

Nanda Devaki, Chauhan Bharati- ***India's Geopolitical Challenges due to Chinese influence inthe North East(2023).*** Its implications for national security: analysed the rivalry between the two Asian giants- China and India. They addressed that the geopolitical location of India's Northeast region is very vulnerable to keeping unstable and enhancing the gap between local people and the government of India. They highlight the national security threats for India in the northeast region due to Chinese influence at the Indian border across the Northeast.

Malik Hasan Yaser Malik*: Siliguri : A Geopolitical Manoeuvre Corridor in the Eastern Himalayan Region for China and India(2015).* Studied that Siliguri Corridor being part of Indian West Bengal is a diplomatic manoeuvre place located between Nepal, Bhutan Bangladesh. It is situated between seven sister states and Chumbi hills in the Eastern Himalayan region. Being landlocked between all the neighbouring countries, this corridor has enormous economic and political value for the region of entire Northeast. *The author also* analysed the problem of ethnic insurgency, this corridor has been the passage for illegal practices like smuggling and terrorism.

Fasham Nafiz(2020) : In his ***Siliguri Corridor : Geostrategic Importance and Future challenges***, tried to highlight the geographical realities of the region , the recent developments surrounding it and how turbulence in the area can have major regional implication

C. Joshua Thomas. (2017) "Synergising North East with Act East policy", in Pankaj Jha and Rahul Mishra (Eds.), Integrating North East in India's Act East Policy, New Delhi: ICWA, pp. 116-123. In this article he has emphasized the role of Northeast India for better implementation of Act East Policy.

M Amarjeet Singh in his article namely ***Reimagining India-ASEAN relations: what does it mean for Northeast India*** tried to highlight how Northeast India has been quite significant in the Indo- ASEAN relationships.

Kahmei Rajeanlung ***(2021) BIMSTEC and its Implications on North East Region of India*** in his article highlighted the role of BIMSTEC in augmenting better trade relationship and rapid growth and faster connectivity through the North east region of India.

Sreeparna Banerjee, Ghosh Ambar Kumar (2023) ***India's Northeast: Gateway to connectivity with Eastern Neighbours*** in their article they highlighted the pivotal role of India's Northeast region connecting space between India and its neighbours to the east in South Asia as well

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as to East and South East Asia and beyond, enhancing country's diplomatic, infrastructural and commercial engagements.

Objectives of the study:

- To analyse the geo-strategic , geopolitical importance of the Siliguri Corridor and the future challenges that India is going to face from the Chinese aggression.
- To examine the major security threat to India especially to Northeast India due to the illegal activities in the neighbouring countries through that corridor.
- To explore and scrutinize the economic growth and development of the Siliguri region.
- To understand the trade benefits from the Siliguri as Siliguri being the gateway of North East India connecting Indian mainland, NER and neighbouring countries.
- To study the problem of illegal infiltration and migrations, cross border terrorism taking place through the corridor.

Hypothesis:

(a)Chicken Neck or the Siliguri corridor crucial to implement India's Act East policy in a better and effective way.

(b)Geostrategic location of Siliguri Corridor and external support are contributory factors in fomenting insurgency and separatism in Northeast India.

(c) Siliguri Corridor plays pivotal role for economic development of Northeast India.

(d) Economic development and security of Northeast India are necessary conditions for the success of BIMSTEC.

Contribution of the Research work to the Discipline and allied disciplines:

This present study about the geostrategic importance of Siliguri Corridor will contribute a good deal to India's foreign policy towards China. The study will contribute to understand India China border issue and the role of Northeast India in India-China relations. This research work will contribute to the allied disciplines like Geography, Economics and International Relations. The policy formulator will have relevant help after this research is conducted. This present study will help tighten the security management all around the Siliguri Corridor and secure India from Chinese aggression.

Research Methodology:

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Research Design:

The study will be undertaken with historical- analytical method. Multidisciplinary approach would be adopted borrowing methodological paradigms and conceptual tools from disciplines of Political Science, History, and International relations.

Sources of Data Collection:

Both primary and secondary sources of data collection will be used.

Primary Sources: The Primary data will be collected from different government reports, Ministry of External affairs' reports and DONER reports etc.

Secondary Sources: Books, Newspapers, Journals, Internet, Magazines, Official Documents, and records of Indo China agreements.

Data Analysis:

The collected data from the study will be analysed and presented using various statistical software. The findings of the data will be presented and interpreted using single statistical tools such as charts, tables, figure, pie-charts and bar.

Tentative Chapterization:

Chapter I – Introduction:

Earnest effort would be made to portray the political scenario of the South Asian Region. The bilateral relations between the two Asian giants would be put in historical perspective. In the recent few decades, the paradigm shifted, and power politics becomes the main focus of the South Asian Region. South Asian Region has some locations with tremendous geopolitical significance. The Chicken Neck of India is such a notable strategic location. It is a terrifying vulnerable artery in Northeast India. Its geostrategic importance would be examined in the context of Chinese policy of expansionism.

Chapter 2: Geographical and historical perspective on the Siliguri Corridor

Geographical location of the Siliguri Corridor would be analysed. How sensitive this narrow stretch of land is would be discussed in the context of Northeast India. It is the connecting corridor of Northeastern India to the rest of India. The geography of the Siliguri Corridor would be put to historical perspective as well.

Chapter 3 : The Chinese interests and their impact on North east India

In this chapter, the prime endeavour would be to locate Northeast India in India China bilateral relations. The geostrategic, political and economic significance of India's Northeast

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in India China engagements would be addressed. Northeast India as a potential factor in influencing India China bilateral relations would be analysed in the present context.

Chapter 4: Insurgency and Secessionist movements in Northeast India

In this chapter major crisis of ethnic insurgency and different secessionist movements taking place in Northeast India would be thrown light with special reference to Assam-Bengal border. The problem of illegal migration from Bangladesh happening through Siliguri Corridor, cross border terrorism, human trafficking, smuggling would be analysed.

Chapter 5: **Alternative arrangements for the protection of the Siliguri Corridor**

India's alternative security plans to protect Chicken Neck will be analysed. Few proposed alternative road constructions are going on so that Northeastern states can be accessed without using The Siliguri Corridor. For that purpose, bilateral agreement and talks between India and Bangladesh has already been initiated. All that possibilities will be studied.

Chapter 6: Siliguri Corridor, Economic Development and BIMSTEC

Chapter 7: Some Conclusions would be attempted on the basis of foregoing research problem. An analysis and interpretation of the research problem would be attempted.

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